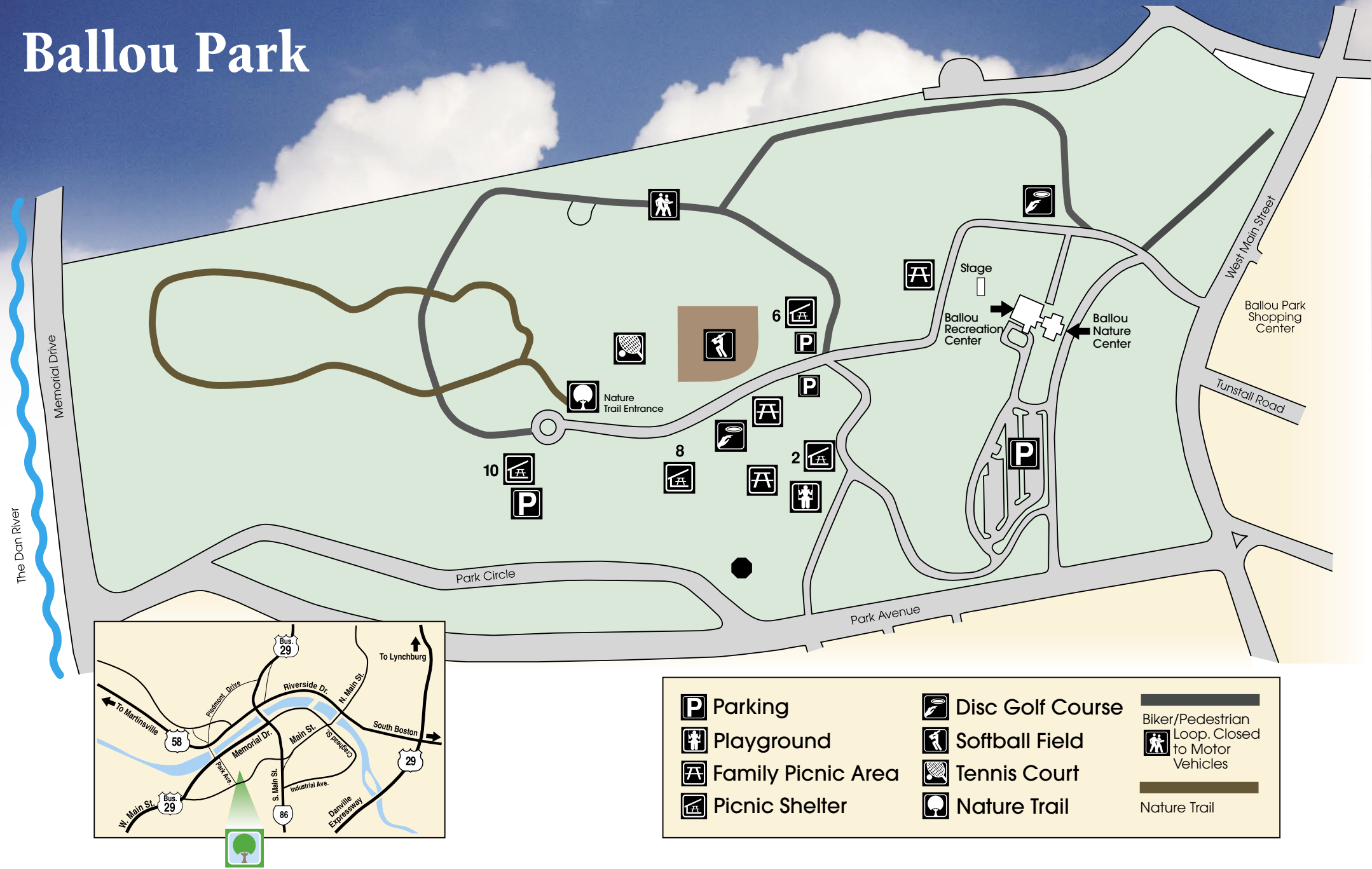


# Ballou Park



## Interpretative Nature Trail

Numbers correspond to markers on trail.

- 1-Maple.** There are approximately 115 species of maples found throughout the world. The lovely tree is well known for the glorious red to golden autumn colors of its broad five-lobed leaves which produce paired u-shaped or v-shaped seeds. The maple is prized for the building of furniture & flooring, since the wood is very resistant to abrasive wear.
- 2-White Oak.** Recognizable as a member of the white oak group by the leaves with rounded lobes and the light gray bark, this specimen is a hybrid of white oak and post oak as evidenced by the study of the acorns. The lumber from the white oak group is important to heavy construction such as flooring, furniture, fence posts, and it is especially prized for use in the construction of ships. The white oak may have a lifetime of up to 600 years.
- 3-Black Cherry.** The bark and the foliage of this aromatic tree have a distinctive cherry-like odor and bitter taste when crushed. The small dark fruit maturing in the summer is food for birds and can be used for jelly and wine; wild cherry cough medicine is processed from the bark. This species is the largest of the native cherries in the United States.
- 4-Sycamore.** Most commonly seen arching over rivers and streams, the sycamore is easily recognized by its peeling white bark. The most massive tree in the Eastern United States, it is frequently the victim of heart rot. If this occurs, the hollow tree provides homes for raccoon, squirrel and honeybees. Pioneers often used the hollow trunk for troughs and canoes.
- 5-Animal Hote & Wet Weather Stream.** As storm-damaged trees begin to decay they become a natural “Animal Hotel” for wildlife that live in Ballou Park. To produce and preserve habitat for native animals, a number of fallen trees are left for insects and weather to begin the process of decomposition. By implementing this simple measure, natural habitat for animals such as squirrels, raccoons, and nesting birds is provided. The wet weather stream running beside the Animal Hotel provides a habitat for frogs, turtles, salamanders, and insects. The cool, shaded stream encourages growth of Christmas ferns, moss, and similar vegetation.
- 6-Red Oak.** A helpful way to distinguish this tree from other oaks is by the striped appearance of the bark, or “ski trails” as they are sometimes called. It is one of the most rapidly growing oaks, transplants easily, is hardy in city conditions and withstands cold temperatures.
- 7-Flowering Dogwood.** Virginia’s State Tree, the Dogwood is one of the most common understory shrubs. It is easily recognizable in the spring when in bloom with white flowers and a crown of berries. The early pioneers used the twigs for toothbrushes and made a tooth powder from the dried bark to produce a whitening effect.

- 8-Hornbeam (Blue Beech).** Commonly referred to as the Ironwood or Muscledwood, the trunk has a distinctive sinewy or muscular appearance. This exceptionally hard and strong wood makes excellent fuel and is good for tool handles.
- 9-American Beech.** Easily recognized by its smooth gray bark, the American Beech is quite common in the final woodland community. The triangular beechnut is edible and is consumed in quantities by wildlife. Due to its smooth, soft bark, the beech is easily defaced by carvings, which can shorten the lifespan of the tree.
- 10-Strangling Vines.** If the poison ivy vine growing on this tree continues to spread, it can stunt the tree’s growth and eventually kill it. From the conservation standpoint, a decision must be made. The area may be left in an undisturbed state while nature takes its course, or forestry management techniques may be initiated, removing the vines and allowing the tree to become more productive and healthy. What are the positive outcomes of each alternative?
- 11-Gneiss Out-Cropping** A gneiss (pronounced nice) is metamorphic rock originating deep in the earth that becomes exposed by the wearing away of upper coverings, as is evidenced by the weathering of the loamy soil in this area. Looking closely at this rock you will notice the banding of elements characteristic of a gneiss. The usual minerals found in this metamorphic rock are quartz, feldspar, mica or hornblende.
- 12-Basswood.** A member of the Linden family, the wood of this tree is prized by wood carvers because it is easily worked and has a smooth grain. Early settlers and Native Americans used the fibrous inner bark to fabricate rope, and the nectar from a flowering species yields a superior honey.
- 13-Sweetgum.** Easily recognized by its star-shaped leaf and drooping prickly “balls”, the sweetgum is second only to the oaks in timber production among hardwoods. A gum, used medicinally and for chewing gum during pioneers days, can be obtained from the trunk by peeling the bark.
- 14-Natural Spring** The natural spring that once bubbled to the surface has receded. The spring was fed by an underground stream representative of many that follow the terrain of the land and eventually reach the Dan River. While spring water is often clear and tempting to drink, it is generally unsafe due to microorganisms and bacteria invisible to the eye. What natural and human factors might have contributed to the disappearance of this spring?
- 15-Tulip Poplar.** The Tulip Poplar, also known as the Yellow Poplar, is one of the tallest, straightest trees in the Eastern United States. It can grow to be 120 feet in height. The name Tulip Poplar

- comes from the outline of the leaf, which resembles the shape of a tulip and from the orange/yellow tulip-like flower. Due to its height and uniformity of caliper, pioneers frequently used the poplar in the construction of log cabins.
- 16-Eastern Burning Bush.** On the opposite side of the trail, notice the Eastern Burning Bush, a wing-stemmed, bushy shrub. The leaves of this tree are very small and thin extending only 1 to 2 inches in length. This shrub flowers between the months of April and May and produces colorful encased seeds and fruits in the autumn.
- 17-Southern Magnolia.** This broad-leaved evergreen is often planted in the southern coastal areas of the United States and has adapted well to our region. The leaves produced by this particular magnolia are unique, for they are shiny green on top and feature a rust-colored fuzz beneath. A fragrant flower 7-8 inches across characterizes the tree.
- 18-White Pine.** The Eastern White Pine is the largest conifer in the region, with a height potential exceeding 100 feet. This pine is also used for construction and furniture products. The White Pine is commonly planted at strip mines and clear-cut sites to foster erosion control and to begin a new forest community.
- 19-Sassafras.** These small sassafras saplings represent a common eastern understory shrub with peculiar mitten shaped, two to four-lobed leaves. The leaves are brilliant in the fall when they turn shades of rich orange and red. The fruit that is produced by the Sassafras provides many birds with a delightful meal.
- 20-Magnolia.** One of more than 80 varieties of magnolia, this sapling is flourishing in local climate and soil conditions, although probably not native to the area. With no other magnolias in sight, the seed was, in all likelihood, dropped by a bird, covered by fallen debris and watered by rainfall causing it to sprout and thrive in the forest.
- 21-Shortleaf Yellow Pine.** One of the most common pines, this tree is native to 20 southeastern states. Easily identifiable by the large rectangular plates of bark, the shortleaf grows 80-100 feet on favorable sites. An important timber species, the shortleaf produces lumber for construction and millwork, as well as for other uses.
- 22-Mulberry & Redbud.** Mulberry leaves are generally oval and may have two or three lobes. The fruit is very similar in appearance & taste to that of a blackberry. Once the fruits turn deep purple they become an important food source for birds. The Redbud displays delicate lavender flowers that brighten the edge of woodlands in early spring. The heart-shaped leaves spread in a low canopy during the summer and feature hanging clusters of seedpods.

